

Ref: CC Docket No. 95-155
Toll Free Service Access Codes

The Honorable Kevin J. Martin
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Mr. Martin:

I am writing to renew and update the Department of Health and Human Services' request that the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) reassign five toll free numbers utilized as suicide prevention hotlines to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The five toll free numbers are: (800) 784-2433 (1-800-SUICIDE), (877) 784-2432 (1-877-SUICIDE), (888) 784-2433 (1-888-SUICIDE), (800) 442-4673 (1-800-442-HOPE), and (800) 827-7571.

On August 25, 2006, Secretary Leavitt submitted a request (enclosed) to the FCC for assignment of the number 1-800-SUICIDE to SAMHSA. On that date, SAMHSA was able to reach agreement with the telecommunications provider, Patriot Communications, LLC, and the Kristin Brooks Hope Center (KBHC) to assume financial responsibility for the five lines listed above. McLeodUSA Telecommunications is the Responsible Organization for the toll free numbers. SAMHSA has worked diligently to establish a permanent arrangement to support these critical lines.

Patriot recently informed SAMHSA that absent a binding, written agreement permitting unencumbered use of the lines, Patriot will cease routing telephone calls to the toll free telephone numbers on January 8, 2007. The total call volume for these five toll free lines is approximately 30,000 per month. Each call potentially represents a caller in crisis, seeking assistance for a mental health emergency. We seek this reassignment in order to minimize the potential for loss of life due to callers being unable to connect immediately with a crisis center that can provide counseling or dispatch rescue services if needed.

As stated in the August 25, 2006 letter to you, HHS is gravely concerned that permitting these toll free numbers to be disconnected and unused is not in the best interests of the public. Therefore, SAMHSA respectfully requests that the Chairman exercise his authority to waive section 47 CFR §52.111 of the regulations governing toll-free numbers and any other rules necessary, so that (800) 784-2433, (877) 784-2432, (888) 784-2433, (800) 442-4673 and

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(800) 827-7571 are assigned to SAMHSA on a permanent basis. We request further that the FCC direct McLeodUSA, Inc., the current Responsible Organization, to permit SAMHSA to port the toll free numbers to the Responsible Organization of its choosing, consistent with FCC rules on portability.

Due to the urgency of the situation, we respectfully request that FCC consider this matter on an expedited basis. Further, we respectfully request that FCC waive the public comment period for this request. If these five toll free numbers are placed on disconnect status, then each day, or even every hour, during which calls go unanswered, may pose a risk to callers in crisis. Therefore, to permit a public comment period while the line remains idle would defeat the very purpose of allowing an immediate reassignment of the number to SAMHSA.

We would be happy to respond to any questions you may have, and thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Eric B. Broderick, D.D.S., M.P.H.
Acting Deputy Administrator
Assistant Surgeon General

Enclosure